Topic: <u>*Vocational Rehabilitation Transition:*</u>

The group was asked for feedback regarding the identified issues below, from a recent RSA Technical Assistance Circular, as well as whether they have identified additional issues

- The effective collaboration between VR services and State educational agencies for the provision of transition services;
- The VR process as it relates to referral and application for services, the determination of eligibility, and the development of the IPE; and
- The services that may be provided through the VR program.

Questions discussed during the forum:

1. <u>*In your opinion, what transition services may be most beneficial for transition aged students?*</u>

2. <u>*What are the current barriers for students with disabilities for transitioning from school to work?*</u>

3. <u>*What can we learn from some success stories in Indiana or other states?*</u>

4. <u>*How can current partnerships (i.e. schools, DOE, providers, families, etc.) be strengthened to better prepare students for life after high school?*</u>

5. <u>*Where are the pitfalls of the current referral process for VR?*</u>

Next Steps:

1) *Increase "visibility" of VR within school settings*

2) *Educate schools, parents, providers, VR staff about VR's eligibility and appropriate services.*

3) *Better education is needed about Benefits ("fear of losing benefits")*

4) *What can we learn from Project SEARCH?*

Feedback

1. *What are the current barriers for students with disabilities for transitioning from school to work?*
   - Lack of support system
   - Lack of transportation to work, to VR (can VR come to the home, the school?)
   - Have to get permission from parents to invite VRC to conference
   - Legal difficulties - criminal history
   - Education of families on working and benefits - fear of loss of benefits check - need to help families understand they can improve their situation through work
   - Some schools don't have means of getting students out on work sites - need to increase opportunities
   - Unrealistic expectations
   - Lack of time/structure to spend adequate discovery time with students under RBF

2. *In your opinion, what transition services may be most beneficial for transition aged students?*
   - Work readiness, soft skills and social skills development - best way to do this is through meaningful work experiences
   - Project SEARCH – key concepts that work: being part of an organization, learning skills, getting praise, setting expectations, involvement of school system and rest of team - huge support system, EC knows student so well that making a good job match is easier and more successful.
   - Technology assessments to see what students may benefit from when they leave school -i.e. IPads.
   - Job task analysis – this often does not get completed in the rush to get a case moving forward into placement and stabilization.

3. *Where are the pitfalls of the current referral process for VR?*
   - Teachers unaware of VR or have missing info
   - Students don't want to self-identify
   - Timeliness issues - length of time from referral to VR until services begin
   - Consumers don't follow up after application or referral – we lose people
   - We don't always go to individuals and catch them where they are on a regular bases – catch them in their typical setting i.e. school
   - VR Office signage does not provide good explanation - need to explain what it is so people know if they can benefit
   - Visibility of VR is low - increasing presence of VR staff in schools will help
   - Message is not always consistent
   - Capacity of staff - insufficient staff to address need

4. *How can current partnerships (i.e. schools, DOE, providers, families, etc.) be strengthened to better prepare students for life after high school?*
   - Joint training, especially on procedural matters (consistency issues)
   - Identify other partners - DWD, BDDS, post-secondary schools, DMHA, DOJ, Chambers, IDEC, Alternative training beyond traditional post-secondary schools i.e. Ivy tech certificate programs
   - Improve communication
   - Develop transition councils
   - Develop and utilizing BLNs
   - Share success stories – find a means of doing this more regularly

5. *What can we learn from some success stories in Indiana or other states?*
   - Project search is a good model – look at key concepts and apply to every-day practice of supported employment
   - VR Transition grants – a best practice, i.e. single point of contact immersed in school
   - Target students most at risk of falling through cracks
   - Education provided for teachers
   - Better coordinate with other partners to cut down on duplication
   - Any types of work experience/summer internships (learn a lot about student - good discovery)
   - Benefits Information Network (BIN) – important to give good info

- Joint training - we all hear the same message
- Annual transition fair - students K-12 on IEP/504 – a draw was Colts player as keynote speaker, teacher incentives for getting students/families to attend, door prizes; 30 vendors; called community and transition resource fair (Monroe co.)
- Presence of other partners on site i.e. VRC as WorkOne - increases ease of access for individuals and education about one another from agency perspective

Additional comments and suggestions:

- Partner with DWD - single contact for employment services and assistance with career planning/jobs
- Partner with appropriate entities to develop business relationships/hiring opportunities
- Complete a psych evaluation and physical on all who enter VR as MSD - would help with getting appropriate documentation for extended supports purposes - people losing follow along b/c can't get diagnostics.
- Thanks for the opportunity to give feedback – please continue to seek stakeholder input.
- **Communication Issues:**
  - Need to bridge services between VR and schools and also between other service providers such as BDDS, case managers, and other adult service providers. A
  - An identified lack of communication from VR to case manager – each party needs a means of getting regular updates.
  - A lack of communication on the status of consumers waiver eligibility/status
  - Inconsistent messaging about VR – message is not always the same, and there is a lack of info or people have misinformation about VR.
  - For individuals on waivers - employment seems to be the last thought for case managers
- **Outreach issues**
  - Timing - outreach should start much earlier than high school (i.e. in kindergarten) but unsure how to accomplish this. There is a need to get families involved as soon as possible.
  - Approach – many kids fall through the cracks such as those with MI – need to develop relationships with school nurses (they often administer medications and know who the kids are who have a mental illness/behavior issues), and with school psychologists/counselors.
  - Some students do not want to be identified or labeled as a person with a disabilities and may be unlikely to respond to marketing/outreach that would mean they have to identify that way.
    i. Suggestion: Send info to ALL students, and not just those identified as having a disability.
    ii. Suggestion: More outreach to college student/disability service offices occur as they do not always know the extent of resources available.